

# T. C Harris

Timothy Charles Harris.

**00: 58**

Born March 26th, 1974 at Houston, TX. 37 years. 22 years on waterfront. Spent time as child taking food to dad while he was working. 4-5 years old, watching real crates of goods , watching men work. Attracted to it. Exposed to it from an early age. Camaraderie and closeness of families. There for commonwealth of working class people. Have seen men move trains from Russia to elephants from Africa for the Houston zoo.

Was illegal to work. Started at 16. *Wanted to do something different.* Worked summer months. Tough, hard work. Did labor intense work. Best decision was to work there.

**6:15**

Father pushed for education. Working at the docks was a summer thing. Was to pursue college or military. First job unloading rail cars of bagged goods. 110 lb bag of cargo. 1400 in one rail car. Unload 4 cars. 6800 bags to take out. Could not quit the first day. Had a namesake to keep up. Made it through first day. Because of pride and not to fail father.

**9:22**

Worked out of Lake Charles, Corpus Christ, Beaumont, Brownsville. A network, follow a ship, crew of men were together. Shape up was to see if physically able to perform duties. See if they can hold up weight on a ship. Nepotism exists in these situations. At Lake Charles, Louisiana there would be shape up underneath the oak tree right down street from the port. Every local does it different. Does Shape up now. *Flocked to wherever the work was at.* Lifestyle of a longshoreman does not change from port to port.

**13:10**

When work is down have to move around to find work. Work is pretty good in Houston. Labor intense work in Houston. Formed a related group out of Texas, a collaboration of different people from Texas. Helped each other. Was a young guy coming in, so all little bit older. Everybody usually took somebody under their wing. Made contact with people of that nature. Always the youngest one in the group.

**16:40**

Was a longshorewarehouseman. Have worked waterside locals. Port of Houston is home port. Locals have separate criteria to establish seniority, Number of hours, years. Person working in a certain place for a number of years has opportunity to select jobs based on number of hours and years put in. Can vary from port to port depending on volume of work. Can make a selection on a shape up. This is set up

by union officials. Did hard work for 13 years. Travelled a lot. Handle the certifications and education to locals. More opportunities are there and therefore don't have to do too much labor intensive work.

**19:40**

Latching and securing cargo is a skill. Loading and unloading bagged goods. Can range from 160 lbs of coffee to 110 lbs of rice and beans, Food grade cargo going overseas or coffee coming in.

Containerization was in effect but volume wasn't enough. Was stuck in labor intensive mode. Nowadays a lot handled in distribution center and less amount of labor intensive work. Poseco cranes, empty handlers used. Long time to get to operate heavy equipment. Like to move cargo, like difficult things, big pieces try to figure out how to move. Loaded Black Hawk helicopters, military work from Desert Storm to Iraq to Afghanistan. *Watching them move cargo is an art.*

**24:10**

Supervisor, foreman and work crew. National Cargo Bureau like insurance company sent to see if everything goes smoothly, secured safely. Ensures cargo does not come loose or unsecured. Coast guard also makes sure cargo is secured properly.

**27:31**

Shaped up in different ports. Would not have believed if someone said would be union official for 9 years including present term. Became walking foreman. Had a good group of people who believed could make good union official. Support from people was good. Knew wouldn't go anywhere because of inter generational ties. Port has been good to family. Proud to be doing this, it is an honor.

**30:50**

Assist in shaping up the labor, help in hiring labor, cargo expeditors, mechanics. At work at 4.30 am, look at work records, make sure of have highly trained workforce. As business agent, handle the handling of the men, look at books for the treasurer and help in education. Work from 4.30 am to around 5 pm or even 7.30. Long hours. Handle everyday business. If you are handling equipment, need to take a physical examination. Did not have to do a physical when started work at 16. Then just had to be young and in good shape and willing to work. Big change. Keep up with daily upkeep of office. Handle payroll, problems on dock.

**34:45**

Industry grew at a wild pace in the last few years. Demand for equipment operators has risen. Manpower development program, training program set up. Work as Director of Certification. Non union guys work with us and don't go back. Highly trained workforce in the last 10 years. System is based on seniority and can choose jobs based on number of years in industry. Nothing different between union and non union workers except training and some representatives there to fight for common good, bargain for livable wages. Non-union guys come in, reach a decision about wages and work. Have a guy who worked as mechanic at a non-union yard for \$12/hour as opposed to working with union with

benefits for \$32/hour with benefits. Didn't figure that out years ago maybe because he was content. There were high peak months, then work would drop off where 2-3 weeks in a month there was no work. As long as ship is in the water and there is cargo that moves through here, there will be longshoreman.

**42:52**

Lot more automation. Older guys thought containers would be the death of waterfront, but it has made it grow. Younger people here with hand eye coordination and computer skills which is required. Lot more younger people coming in. Older guys made me respect this place and what it is. Not too much friction between older and younger generation. If you don't learn from your past what kind of future will you have.

**47:50**

Brother is an anesthesiologist. Was on the waterfront before me. Then went on to study and pursue his dreams. Was a competition between home team and visiting team to fill ships. Between Texas boys and Lake Charles Louisiana. Paid by tonnage, more you move more you make. Good camaraderie between everyone. As a business agent, popular guy everyone around you. Earlier on it was like a family, with each other all the time. Very tight knit group. Kids know what longshoring is. Daughter understand containerization. Asks questions about logistics. Son reminds me of me. Son wanted to come down to the docks in the summer to work. Make him the fourth generation doing that. Would not deny the opportunity to son. Took daughter down to docks and maybe because of that she asks so many questions about the docks. See a trend now.

**56:30**

Warehouseman vs a gang or a shoreside. Prepare cargo for a ship. Palletize everything by hand. Meaning stacking everything. Could be barbed wire, nail, grinding ball, sand, anything. Gang foreman, two drivers and three working persons. 2 people and a driver would be together unloading a rail car. When work drops off, lose a workforce. Workforce will travel looking for work. Since recession, work has dropped off in some areas. It is hard on new guys coming in. Bag goods are big around spring and fall. Mostly perishable items.

**1:02:10**

Foolish to not learn from past grudges and mistakes. How can we do better for them so that we can become more employable. Did not come under the bad rap regime. Dealt with a bunch of different union officials used to handling people differently. End of the day the only thing we have is good labor. Good relations with them. Need to have proficient people that make employers people. If they make money employers are able to make more money to pay labor. More educated, proficient group. Times have changed, attitudes have changed.

**1:07:00**

No progress without sacrifice. Not a bad place to be. Blessing to me and family.